

" Captain, my Captain "
by
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CAPTAIN, MY CAPTAIN

By Elizabeth Frazer

ILLUSTRATIONS BY VICTOR C. ANDERSON



It was Friday afternoon, and half-past one to the tick by the placid, round-faced clock above the black-board. Forty pairs of blue and gray and dusky eyes marked the downward-pointing black finger, and straightway forty fond little hopes of the nation sprang to "position" in their primary seats, folded forty pairs of grubby paws neatly behind their backs, and trained their bright gaze toward Teacher's desk. Behind it, focussing all these ardent beams, stood Miss Life, smiling a winged smile out of her eyes—"laughin' on her insides," Joe Cady called it—and holding in her hand a small package.

Miss Life was not her real name. It had come to her in the dawn of her career as a public school teacher in the purlieus of Abingdon Square, when, one day, in a fit of black despair, she flung overboard the stereotyped course of Nature-study, root and branch and bugs, designed another off her own bat, so to speak, better adapted to the little denizens of Jane Street, and enclosed it, with a spirited defence, to the powers that sit in light in Fifty-ninth Street. Something in the tone of this home-rule letter, crackling with defiance, touched a responsive chord in an Irishman on the Board, and moved him to save the contumacious young writer from the wrath that waits upon initiative.

"Let that Miss Life alone," he said, coining the name which made her famous. "And if by any means she can put the mystery and beauty and sacredness of life into those little water-front rats, and 'long-shoremen's kids, in God's name, give her a free hand, gentlemen, and I'll take off my hat to the lady!"

Which he did the very next day, invading Jane Street, and Public School Number Nine for the purpose. And from that one visit—but this is not the Irishman's story.

It was the hour marked on the programme as Nature-study, and Miss Life had elected to instruct her charges in the gentle art of gardening.

"To-day, children," she began, then halted, and threw a puzzled, questioning glance toward the door. From behind it proceeded strange sounds of muffled strife, of scratchings and scufflings, attended by heavy footsteps and an irate voice, as if an animal were being dragged, protesting, across the floor.

"It's that dog!" said Miss Life. "Hennie, you *must* tie him up better! Run out now and help the janitor."

"Hennie," a tiny mulatto, with a voice like a silver lute, a face finely powdered over with freckles like a quail's egg, and surmounted by an impenetrable jungle of inky kinks, bounded from his seat. But before he could reach the door, it was torn open from the outside, and stalwart Officer Kelly, who each morning saluted Miss Life with extreme *savoir faire* at the corner of the block, and who was known throughout the district as the sworn adversary of truants, burst violently into the room.

The gallant copper looked flushed and dishevelled. His helmet was askew, good red blood dribbled from a trinity of scratches which clove their ragged, crimson way down the line of his resolute jaw, and his Celtic eyes coruscated with rage. More terrible than ever, in his disarray, he looked to the awe-stricken ranks of his Liliputian foes like the veritable bright god of destruction, and they quaked in their dusty little boots.

Behind him pressed the Principal, with a worried countenance, and between them, at the extreme end of the strong arm of the Law, and firmly gyved by the Law's shuge fist, hung a panting, wild-eyed atom of a boy.

"Why, Officer!" exclaimed Miss Life. "You are—wounded! What is it?"

"What is ut?" stormed the wrathful guardian of the peace. "Well ye may ask

the outside is not, for there we have unquestionably the most beautiful façade in the city. While in style it resembles the portals of the other churches, the detail and execution are far superior. In fact, the greatest care and taste have been used by architect and artisans to produce a gem.

The president of the university is of the opinion that the old convent should be very carefully examined, as he firmly believes that it was used by the Spaniards to store much of their treasure.

Stories of concealed hoards of gold and jewels are plentiful in Cuzco, and almost every one you meet has some tale of this description. Undoubtedly there is some foundation for them, as when the Spaniards captured the city the inhabitants had no opportunity to remove much of their wealth and were forced to bury it. The greater part was undoubtedly found by the conquerors, but it is likely that many of the caches still remain undiscovered.

From time to time pieces of old Inca gold are brought in by Indians, and it is possible that they know of many hiding-places they are afraid to reveal.

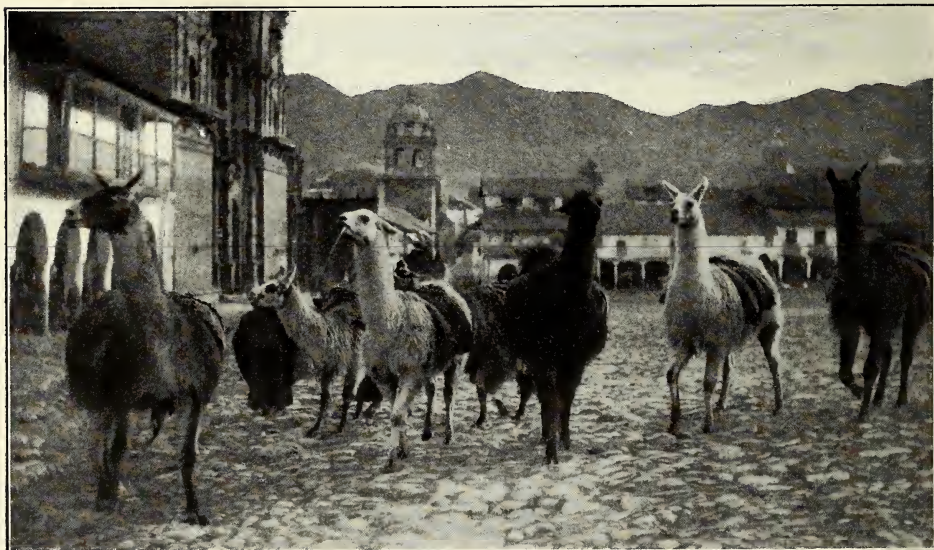
Cuzco is the Mecca for South American travel that it should be; but, interesting as it

is, it is wofully destitute of hotels, for those that masquerade under the name are bad beyond words.

Strangers are rare in Cuzco, for not only is it a difficult place to reach, but to many who would not hesitate to brave the long journey and submit to the discomforts, there is the dread of an attack of *soroche* that in so many cases proves fatal. The climate, too, while delicious, is treacherous, and particularly for foreigners. Those that are forced for one reason or other to live in the city commiserate with one another at a little "mess" which they have organized and which is their only excitement.

All the boxes had been put on board our train and our guards dismissed with *pour boires* that seemed to more than satisfy them. The police, who had watched over our car, run our cook's errands, and served us as general men-of-all-work, were perhaps more loath to have us leave than the others, for to them our visit had meant three days of vacation.

We sat over our coffee until quite late, as Mr. Post hated to make the move that necessitated "good-by," but it had to come at last, and with a "Good luck to you all," he disappeared in the darkness.



Llamas on the plaza.

what it is!" From his seventy-two inches he glowered down at his diminutive captive, who, from narrowed, blue-black eyes gave him back, balefully, glare for glare.

a wild-cat, and clawed a piece of me face off!"

Officer Kelly lifted the imprisoned member of offence, and regarded with strong dis-



From his seventy-two inches he glowered down at his diminutive captive.

"'Tis a little devil out of Hades—a hot little spark out of h—" He stopped abruptly, realizing his gentle environment, and proceeded more judiciously, though a groundswell of Celtic r's still marked the depth of his resentment.

"Three times to-day has he played hooky. The last time, I caught him red-handed, as it were, by the slack of his pants, just as he was skedaddlin' over the back fence. And, as I hauled him down, the young daymon whirled on me like

gust the black-rimmed nails, beneath which resided fragments of his own fair epidermis.

"But, Officer," protested Miss Life in bewilderment, "I'm sorry about your face—but that boy is not *mine*! I'm full. Look here." She swept a hand over her densely populated kingdom. Every small seat was indeed occupied by a passionately interested spectator.

The Principal beckoned her aside.

"I wish you would take him," he urged. "He is a new boy, and a bad one, I'm

afraid. What Kelly says is true. I've tried him in three rooms to-day, and each time he has 'hooked it,' as he would say. This morning Miss Lacy attempted to restrain him, and he wrapped himself round her like a cuttle-fish and bit a hole in her knee."

"He seems of a spirited disposition," murmured Miss Life. She stole a glance at the officer's lacerated jowl and her face bubbled.

"That's one name for it," remarked the Principal dryly. "His mother, who has just moved into the district, is like the old woman who lived in a shoe. The father—" Here followed the chronicle of one whose Road was so beset with pitfall and with gin that a long-suffering community had been forced to sequester him in a country-house on the Hudson.

"It's good American stock," he concluded, "but just—petered-out! The boy is headed for the same place as his father, I suppose, but if we could get him interested——"

"I'll take him," said Miss Life briefly.

The Principal breathed a sigh of relief. "Good! The main thing is to give him the school-habit. He can read," he added encouragingly, "—if he wants to! And he writes like copperplate."

He turned back, laughing, at the door.

"Ask him what his name is!"

Miss Life, thus left in charge of her own quarter-deck, quietly took command.

"Release him, Officer," she ordered. She dropped into a low chair, the better to study her latest acquisition.

He was a slender wisp of a child, with a thin, dark, hard face, blue-gray eyes that had a trick of gazing steadily, and a crest of tar-black hair finer than spun silk. His clothes were foul with mud and in wild disorder. One coat-sleeve had been torn bodily from its socket, and hung, dismembered, by a drab lining; a precarious suspender had permitted the escape in the rear of a small rakish shirt-tail; and battered and rent stockings exhibited a pair of red bruised knees. But despite these signs of dirt and bloody war, there was something about him which Miss Life approved, a look of race, of stamina.

"Come here," she commanded gently.

He backed, sidling off like a hermit-crab, bright, hostile eyes fronting the foe.

"Naw, ye don't!" he muttered between immobile lips.

Miss Life's throat constricted. "Poor babe! He thinks I am going to beat him."

The officer looked at her with pitying contempt.

"Babe nothin'!" he scoffed. "Look at them saffron-tipped fingers. He's a cigarette fiend already."

For the first time, the boy opened his mouth and hurled a word like a rock at his adversary.

"*Youreadamnlial!*"

At this patently unjust charge, Officer Kelly made a swift lunge, plainly bent upon annihilation, when Miss Life intervened.

"What is your name?" she asked.

The sweet bell-tones of Teacher's voice and the soft beams of Teacher's eye had been known to pierce the joints of the armor of more seasoned, though not more fiery warriors, but it was a full minute, during which the new boy stared at her from under piratical, black brows, before he gave up the answer.

"Cappin."

"Cabin?" questioned the amazed, incredulous teacher.

"*Cap'n!*"

"Oh—Captain!" exclaimed Miss Life, beginning to "laugh on her insides." "I see!"

"That's the hell of a Christian name now, ain't it?" demanded Kelly—who himself bore the title of an archangel—speaking the simple thought of his mind. (Fifteen minutes later, over a foaming stein of beer, to the gallant officer's credit be it said, he remembered that fell break and drank deep of remorse.)

"It is a splendid name!" affirmed Miss Life warmly. "There was once a wonderful man called that." She quoted softly:

"O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead."

Slowly, lured by the magical spell of words and voice, the young commander drew nearer, until one hand rested lightly on



"Git out o' the road!" he howled in fierce, anguished tones, uprooting in his path sundry pairs of shoes.—Page 224.

Teacher's knee, and his wide, deep eyes were fastened on Teacher's face.

"Did your Cap'n t'row a fit on his ferry-boat?" he demanded. "An' 'fall down cold an' dead'?"

Miss Life laughed, albeit unsteadily and with a bright mist in her eyes. Never was she able to repeat those matchless lines with composure.

"No, dear. He wasn't captain of a ferry-boat. He was the Big Captain of our country, and saved it from shipwreck. He was very fond of little boys, too! Monday I'll bring you his picture."

She stood up. "And now, Captain, my Captain," she said blithely, "choose the man you'd like to sit with to-day, and next week I'll fix you up regularly."

Captain ranged a judicial eye over his forty hosts, some of whom, in their passion for hospitality, had vacated their seats, and were sitting invitingly in the air beside them. His eye fell upon the diminutive black boy with the marvellous kinks and freckles—and there rested.

"Him!" he pronounced, pointing imperially.

"Hennie" sprang to the extreme outer edge of his seat, his soft dark eyes shining with delight.

The Captain sat down.

Miss Life's smile was a pleasant thing to see.

"I think the Big Captain would like that!"

She turned to the officer. "Thank you so much!" she said sweetly. "I think we needn't detain you any longer from your duty. And, Mr. Kelly," she added in a low voice at the door, "don't go after Captain if he should take another notion to run away. Let him run. He'll come back to me."

"Who could help it?" murmured the gallant officer. He closed the door and opened it again.

"Will I leave you my club?" he inquired grimly.

"You may leave it with the Captain!" she allowed, smiling.

The enemy withdrew, discomfited, and she returned to her belated Nature lesson.

But the afternoon was not destined to pass in uneventfulness. Glancing at the clock, Miss Life saw that she must abridge the talk on seeds if the children were to plant them in the window-boxes prepared for the purpose. So, with a few explanatory words, she delivered the package of seeds to the monitors for distribution.

"Three to each one, boys," she said, "and be careful. For if you should drop one of those little spots of life on the floor without noticing, it would die and lose its chance to become a radish."

Due precautions were observed, each moist and grimy palm received its proper quota, and the mystical ceremony began. The monitors marshalled their respective hosts past the miniature garden-plot, the seeds were separated with some difficulty from sticky fists, and buried with lingering solicitude. Teacher, standing by in the rôle of sexton, marked each spot with a neat stick whereon were inscribed the date and the owner's name.

Last of all came "Hennie," proud leader of his line. Suddenly his decorous band broke rank, scattered like leaves before the first rude rattle of the gale, and in the open space thus cleared was revealed the Captain, down upon all fours, rushing about like a demented young quadruped, and pawing wildly at the floor.

"Git out o' the road!" he howled in fierce, anguished tones, uprooting in his path sundry pairs of shoes so that their owners toppled over backward. "Maybe you're trompin' on the top of it now!"

Miss Life reached the storm centre swiftly.

"Why, Captain—dear lad!" she exclaimed, bending over him in deep concern, "whatever is the matter?"

Captain pushed back a straggling elf-lock, wiped his nose upon a swarthy wrist-band, and lifted a hot, quivering face.

"I—I lost one of them little s-spots o' life," he faltered.

"Oh, well, dear," soothed Teacher, "I'll give you another this time."

Captain sat back on his haunches and looked at her long and piercingly from under frowning brows.

"Won't it die if it's lost," he demanded, "an' never git no chanct to grow up into a reddish?"

"Why—ye-es," admitted Miss Life weakly; "I'm afraid it would."

Captain began grubbing at the floor again.

Feeling the falseness of her position, Miss Life dropped down beside him to assist in the search. She had a vision of herself hunting madly throughout the night, scanning feverishly each speck of dirt by the dim light of a candle, in order to sustain her reputation as an idealist. By rare good fortune the lost seed was found, resting serenely between Captain's third and little fingers, and, together with its two fellows, hastily entombed.

One would like to record that from that day henceforth, never again was our hero guilty of "hooking it" from scholastic halls; but that he took prizes in deportment and cleanliness, and the bright yellow hue faded from his finger-tips, to be seen no more; that he graduated at the head of his class, grew into an honored and upright citizen, and, eventually, such is the privilege of our great democracy, became himself a President. And, in later years, looking back across the past, he was wont to ascribe all his success to the potent influences of Miss Life, and the Big Captain, whose dark brown face, worn and tired, with its expression of goodness, and tenderness, and deep latent sadness, looked down on him daily from the wall where Miss Life had placed it one memorable Monday morning—but such was not the road our Captain took.

In one particular only is the above history veracious. On Monday, according to her plighted word, Miss Life brought the picture of Lincoln. Captain was conspicuous by his absence. In the middle of the morning, however, when Teacher was inducting her B-2 Class into the mystery of "carrying" in addition, the door-knob was softly turned, the door softly opened the width of a crack, and Captain stood fearfully upon the threshold, holding his path of escape clear, and poised for rapid flight. But Teacher's back, at that psychological moment, was elaborately turned, and Teacher's attention, though there straightway arose a forest of wildly waving palms, eager to apprise her of the stranger's advent, remained stubbornly engrossed, and so, after an uncertain pause, the Captain slipped quietly into haven beside "Hennie."



Drawn by Victor C. Anderson.

At that moment a shaft of pale morning sunshine illumined the room and caught within its radiance the two commanders.—Page 226.

Miss Life breathed a sigh of thankfulness, and, turning presently, threw him a warm, radiant smile.

Captain's response was instant, deep answering unto deep.

"Where's my picture?" he demanded. "The Big Cap'n what fell down that day onto the deck?"

"Here it is," replied Teacher, "just waiting to be unwrapped." She lifted from behind her desk a large, flat, brown-paper parcel. "Come on, Captain, and help me undo it."

Thus bidden, the Captain stepped forward and, bending over, unfastened the knots and tore away the coverings, until the picture stood revealed. It was a beautiful, clear print, simply framed.

Miss Life lifted it upon the desk in view of all the children. At that moment a shaft of pale morning sunshine illumined the room and caught within its radiance the two commanders—the small Captain, his hands thrust deep into his pockets and with lifted chin gazing steadily, and the Big Captain, upon whose rugged face, beneath its furrows of vast responsibility, of deep demands of life and death, there appeared to lurk an expression of quizzical tenderness.

"Do you like him?" questioned Miss Life softly.

The Captain tore his reluctant gaze away. "Is he mine?" he answered.

"All yours, my Captain, and for keeps. But wouldn't you like me to hang him on the wall, where we all may see him—just as a loan, you understand? I'll write your name underneath."

"I kin write it," retorted the Captain. And with Teacher's pencil, and bending above Teacher's desk, in clear though childish script, he signed himself. After which proprietary rite the picture was hung, but distinctly understood as a loan exhibition.

The rest of the morning, though not so specified upon the calendar, became a Lincoln's Day. Teacher told simply the story of the great Commoner's life and death; a black-board lesson upon the subject won hearty approbation; "The Star-spangled Banner" was chanted lustily, after which the exercises concluded with the Captain's poem, which Miss Life repeated by request.

Throughout the following weeks, Teacher strove valiantly to attach the Captain as

a permanent satellite to her pleasant system. But, although he listened with unflagging interest to her stories, and spurred her on for more, she had presently to acknowledge her inability to hold him. He was as erratic as a wandering star, visible one day in his place, vanished the next. Which only meant, Miss Life argued rather acutely, that her rowdy little star revolved about another centre. Something else attracted him more strongly. She wondered. . . . But a heavy programme, and the presence of another satellite which threatened to demolish her system, diverted her attention from the runaway, and the days passed.

Came March, turbulent and wild-browed, with mud underfoot, passionate scuds of rain above, and all Jane Street blew its nose on mangy little handkerchiefs and snuffled. April brought a warm, radiant lull, and suddenly, almost overnight, as at the touch of a mystical wand, the world burgeoned. But not the Jane Street world. Across the wide, shining reaches of the river, on the Palisades, the earth wore a filmy, translucent robe of green which grew brighter with the days. Violets, white or faintly blue, breathed forth their fragile incense; the pale pink of arbutus gleamed shyly along dim, leafy trails; maidenhair hung its feathery fronds over hidden springs; the dogwood flung its starry white branches to the soft embracing air; a talking wind moved gently among the boughs of pines and maples; and above all arched the far clear sky, with one smoky segment veiling the spot where lay, battened down with steel and stone and mortar, the next-to-the-biggest town on earth.

Every Saturday Miss Life was afield, usually with some of her small constituency, and scientific research was pursued with a fine ardor. All Nature was looted for Jane Street.

Occasionally, however, she gathered her specimens in the company of a certain Irish Member of the Board, in whom the proximity of Spring and Miss Life had evoked such a dire, compressed, and trussed-up feeling, such a poignant aching of all the senses, as threatened speedily to burst all bonds. It has been said, wisely, that a little Irishman is a dangerous thing. Consider, then, how much greater the danger if the Irishman is big. It was, indeed, like walking abroad with a tall stick of dyna-



Every Saturday Miss Life was afield, usually with some of her small constituency.—Page 226.

mite stalking at one's right side which might explode at the lightest touch—say, for example, if Miss Life should stub her toe and stretch forth a lovely hand for aid. (At such sweet catastrophe, one might well imagine the distraught Irishman crying, "Havoc!" and letting loose the dogs of war!) So that at every moment Miss Life stood in imminent danger of being blown bodily out of the landscape—into another, rosier one, perhaps, with wide, ineffable horizons, but which, being unknown, she feared. Therefore, she went softly, with a faint smile in her eyes like that in the eyes of Raphael's *Cardinello Madonna*, and wished for an eternal *status quo*—as if one could stop the advance of summer!

One morning, with an intuition that it was going to be warm, she arrayed herself in a cool dimity dress, sprigged all over with forget-me-nots. And then, feeling particularly gay of heart, and because the month was May, she finished off with a

pair of open-work silk stockings and black pumps strapped across neat ankles.

"Who cares?" she murmured defiantly to her unpedagogic reflection. "The kiddies like it."

The day proved hot beyond expectation, thick, blowsy, and oppressive. The children were pallid and cross. To complete her distress, the Principal dropped in after lunch, to announce that the monthly reports must be in that afternoon. It was a loathsome task at any time, and, with wrath in her heart, she prepared some desk-work.

Papers and pencils were languidly distributed, and then Teacher enquired guilefully:

"How many of you have little baby brothers or sisters?"

Something like thirty-nine hands testified to the fact that the human race was not becoming obsolete.

"I've got twins!" announced "Hennie" with shy satisfaction.

"That's nice," replied Teacher hastily, "but don't tell me any more! You see, I want you to write me a letter about the baby. Tell me his name and the color of his eyes and if he can talk or walk—a nice long letter all about the baby."

Pencils were eagerly gripped and the epistolary labors begun. Miss Life turned wearily to her roll-book. Since the Captain's advent in their midst the average of daily attendance had tumbled from excelsior heights of perfection down to the dead level of mediocrity. Opposite his name ran an almost uninterrupted line of sinister black checks. Which meant that the Captain had been absent or tardy or both nearly every day in the month. Miss Life frowned and hardened her heart. Something really must be done.

"Captain," she asked severely, "why were you absent this morning?"

The Captain, who was screwed up in his desk, composing furiously, raised his black crest, and bent an absent eye upon her.

"You gimme leave," he replied vaguely.

"Gave you leave to stay away from school? Nonsense!"

"You gimme leave yestidday in the middle of the afternoon to 'Scuse me please!'" he explained patiently, "an' I saved some of the leave over for this mornin'."

Teacher looked at him helplessly, and then her face bubbled.

"I think we'd better talk that over, my Captain. Can you spare a minute after school?"

He nodded. His glance rested dreamily upon Teacher, lifted for a second to the picture above her head of the immortal Matera standing with the Babe upon trailing clouds, and dropped again to his earthly Lady. What were his thoughts? His look travelled from her face where the smile still lingered, down the pleasant, flowered dress, down below the hem, until there swam into his ken the neatly shod feet, incased in lacy stockings.

The Captain's eyes brightened. He leaned far out of his desk, staring fixedly. Then he sat back, reached briskly for his pencil, and added another line.

Ten minutes later, when the letters were collected and Teacher tapped the bell for dismissal, she found him gazing pensive-eyed at the face of the Big Captain.

After school, with Captain leaning easily against her desk, Miss Life sorted her epistles, stopping occasionally to read a line or gasp at some astonishing statement.

"That's mine," said the Captain suddenly. He laid a restraining hand over hers. "Read him."

And Miss Life read:

"Dear teacher the culler of his eys they are purpl. His name is QT you got to be very careful of one thing about a baby on the top of its head that is its skul for if you was to press that dinge it would die in a ours time they must not walk befor they are so old or they will get bolleged. When I am 21 I will get maried and live on a fram I will have lots of childern, hoping you will do the same

CAPTAIN.

Privut dear teacher I like them ventalated stokins your

CAPTAIN.

Controlling a wild desire to laugh, for the young author's blue-gray eyes were fastened absorbingly upon her face, Teacher turned up her palm and squeezed the grubby paw lovingly.

"It's a beautiful letter," she assured him, "and I shall take it home to read aloud. What is Cutie's other name?"

"Jeff—an' his eyes are purple."

"But, dear," remonstrated Teacher, "children don't have purple eyes,—not really purple, you know."

"Yes'm, Cutie he has," insisted Captain. Through narrowed lids he was blinking at a jewel upon Miss Life's left hand which flashed dazzling, rosy lights into his eyes. "He ain't got any sights, either," he added meditatively.

"Of course he has. Everybody has sights."

"Cutie hain't," returned Captain absently. He laid his head on one shoulder to catch the elusive pink glow of the gem, and this time it was green.

"But Cutie couldn't see if he didn't have sights!" cried Teacher, almost cross with her beloved black sheep.

"He don't," said Captain, simply. "He's blind. But he's awful cute!"

"Why—why!" gasped Miss Life. "Are you sure he is blind?"

The Captain nodded. "Yep—out o' both of his eyes he's blind. But he c'n hear all right. An' when mamma goes off an' leaves him all by hisself, he gits lonesome, an' that makes him mad, an' he kicks an' hollers. It's fierce——"

"Um-hm!" The Captain stirred restively and disengaged himself. It disturbed him to be handled.

"He likes me," he confided, "best of all! I'm learnin' him to turn a hand-spring."



"'Scuse me, please!"

"Does mamma leave him alone all day?" interrupted Teacher very gently.

"If she gits an all-day job, she does. An' Cutie he bangs on the door with his fists an' yells 'Ca'a! Ca'a!' That's me," he explained, "he wants to play horse with."

"I see," said Teacher. Her eyes fell upon his card and the condemnatory black line of demerits. Suddenly illumination flashed upon her. She drew him close within the warm circle of her arm.

"And is that what makes you run away—to play with lonely little Cutie?"

Miss Life stared out of the window with unseeing eyes. Her mobile lips quivered. She had a vision of little Brother "Cutie," enraged (as who is not?) by loneliness, toddling blindly to the door, beating puny fists against the panels, and, with brief listening spaces in between, "hollering" ardently. And, at the same time, she saw the Captain in his seat at school, begin on a sudden to fidget, to stare vacantly and give off-hand replies, and finally, raising a signal of distress, mumble, "'Scuse me, please!"—and bolt.

The grand secret was out!
Miss Life turned back to him with shining eyes.

"You—*lamb!*" she murmured unsteadily.

The Captain took ruthless advantage of this sign of weakness.

"Tell me that story 'bout the Big Captain," he commanded, "an' his little boy named Tad."

THE TURNSTILE

BY A. E. W. MASON

XVI

WORDS OVER THE TELEPHONE



THE next two hours were for Rames of the tissue whence nightmares are woven. Rames was conscious that he made speeches and still more speeches and yet others on the top of those, until speech-making became a pain in the head for which there was no anodyne. He made them from windows—one at that very window where Taylor, the lily-fingered democrat, had by a single sentence won immortality and certain defeat—he made them from tables in club-rooms which he no longer recognized; where men, packed tight as herrings, screamed incoherencies in a blaze of light and the atmosphere of a Turkish bath, or standing upon chairs beat him, as he passed beneath them, on the top of the head with their hats in the frenzy of their delight. For two hours Ludsey went stark mad and Harry Rames had reached exhaustion before a gigantic captain of the fire brigade lifted him panting and dishevelled out of the throng, and drawing him into a small committee-room locked the door against his votaries.

"Better wait for a little while here, sir," he said; and it was one o'clock in the morning before he ventured to return to his hotel.

By that time the madness was already past. There was still noise in the blazing rooms of the clubs. But the streets were empty and up the climbing hill the city was quiet as a house of mutes. A placard in the window of the newspaper office recorded the figures of the election, and the boarding which protected the shops opposite to his

hotel shone white in the light of the lamps. But for those two signs, even Rames might have found it difficult of belief that so lately this very hill had rung with cheers and seethed with a tumultuous populace. Tomorrow, however, the sirens of the factories would shrill across the house-tops at six and the work of a strenuous industrial town begin. Ludsey had no time to dally with victories won and triumphs which had passed.

Nor indeed had Harry Rames. He rang the bell at the door and entered the hall quickly. There was something which he should have done before now, though only now he remembered it. With a word to the porter, he went into the office and switched on the electric light. He crossed to the corner where the telephone was fixed and called up the White House. A woman's voice, very small and clear, came back to him over the lines. He recognized it with a thrill of satisfaction. It was Cynthia Davenport's.

"Oh, it's you yourself," he cried eagerly, and he heard Cynthia, at the other end of the telephone, laugh with pleasure at his eagerness.

"Yes," she answered. "I thought perhaps you might ring me up."

So she had waited—just that they might talk together for a few moments. Harry Rames, however, did not answer her. It seemed to him from the intonation of her voice that she had more to say if she would only make up her mind to say it. He stood and waited with the receiver at his ear, and after a little while Cynthia spoke again upon a lower note.

"I am glad that you did. I should have been disappointed if you hadn't."

"Thank you," said Rames.

